Toscanelli & Columbus
Letters to Sir. Clements
R. Markham and to C.
Raymond Beazley
Virginia Historical

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MAGELLAN
and the AGE of DISCOVERY

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TOSCANELLI AND COLUMBUS

LETTERS

TO

SIR CLEMENTS R. MARKHAM, C.B., F.R.S.

President Royal Geographical Society, etc.

AND TO

C. RAYMOND BEAZLEY, M.A.

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE AND THE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THIS CONTROVERSY

LONDON
SANDS & CO.
12 BURLEIGH STREET, STRAND
1903

Henry Vignaud

First Secretary of the United States Embassy

18, Avenue Hoche

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A FOREWORD

I HAD resolved not to reply any further to those who had so easily criticised my book by bandying from one to the other the same arguments; but I have felt compelled to make exceptions for the two reviews in *The Times* and *The Guardian*, firstly, because of their authors' high distinction, and, secondly, because they brought forward weighty arguments which I was bound to answer.

If, as Mr Beazley asserts, the Portuguese were seeking the route to the East Indies, even earlier than 1474, the fundamental proof of my proposition, the one that constitutes the starting-point of all the others, would be annihilated. Were it true, as Sir Clements Markham thinks, that Columbus set sail from Palos with the great design of seeking the Indies, the question of the authenticity of the Toscanelli correspondence would be devoid of all interest.

Were these facts so, serious workers would have a severe account to settle with me, for having disturbed their studies and wasted their time, by intruding upon them a question devoid of all foundation; and, far from being, as Mr Beazley amiably describes it, a "suggestive monograph" treated with "great ingenuity," or, as Sir Clements Markham has honoured me by calling it, a "learned and interesting work" —my book would deserve no better fate than to be committed to the flames. But neither on the first nor the second of these points do I fear the final judgment of my judges.

As to the first point I shall add nothing to what I say here: the subject is exhausted.

On the second point, my History of the presentation, the discussion, and the acceptance of Columbus's scheme, a work which will shortly appear, will say all that need be said.

HENRY VIGNAUD.

UNITED STATES EMBASSY,
PARIS, *January* 1903.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE TOSCANELLI-COLUMBUS CORRESPONDENCE

THE question of the authenticity of the Toscanelli-Columbus correspondence was first publicly raised in a paper read at the Congress of the Americanists in 1900 by M. Vignaud, who therein stated that it was to M. de La Rosa he was first indebted for the idea, but with whom he disagreed on essential particulars.

In the course of that Congress M. de La Rosa made some remarks on the same subject, and also on some obscure points in the life of Columbus: these remarks, subsequently developed, constitute the paper numbered 21 in this list.

No. 1. UZIELLI (Gustavo).—La Scoperta dell' America al Congresso degli Americanists del 1900. Florence, M. Ricci, 1901, 8vo, p. 7. (From the *Rivista geografica Italiana*, Part III., 1901.)

Remarks on the communications above mentioned made by M. Vignaud and M. de La Rosa to the Americanist Congress of 1900.

No. 2. VIGNAUD (Henry).—La Lettre et la Carte de Toscanelli sur la route des Indes par l'ouest adressées en 1474 au Portugais Fernam Martins et transmises plus tard à Christophe Colomb. Etude critique sur l'authenticité et la valeur de ces documents et sur les sources des idées cosmographiques de Colomb, suivie des divers textes de la Lettre de 1474, avec traductions, annotations et fac-similé par

Henry Vignaud, premier Secrétaire de l'Ambassade des Etats-Unis en France, Vice-Président de la Société des Américanistes, etc. Paris, Leroux, 1901, large 8vo, pp. xxiv.-319.

This is an enlargement of the paper read before the Congress of Americanists, held at Paris in September 1900, with the addition of documentary evidence.

No. 3. FITZMAURICE-KELLY (James).—The Columbus Forgeries. (From the *Morning Post.* London, October 17, 1901.)

The first critical review of M. V.'s book published in England. A most brilliant, clever, and accurate account of the work.

No. 4. WAGNER (Hermann).—Henry Vignaud. La Lettre et la Carte de Toscanelli, etc. Berlin, 1902, 8vo, pp. 107-121. (From the *Goettingischen gelehrten Anzeigen.*)

An able but adverse review of M. V.'s No. 2 by the well-known Professor of Geography at the University of Göttingen. Dwells mainly on the cartographical side of the question.

No. 5. UZIELLI (Gustavo).—Toscanelli, Colombo e la leggenda del Pilota. Florence, M. Ricci, 1902, 8vo, p. 98. (From the *Rivista geografica Italiana* of Rome, Part I., 1902.)

A bitter and unfair criticism of M. V.'s work. For a scorching reply to this attack, see No. 10.

No. 6 GALLOIS (L.).—Toscanelli et Christophe Colomb. Paris, Colin, 1902. (From the *Annales de Géographie*, March 1902.)

A fair, considerate, but adverse review of M. V.'s No. 2. For a reply see No. 10.

No. 7. UZIELLI (Gustavo).—Polemica Toscanelliana. (*Rivista geografica Italiana*, Part III., March. Rome, 1902.)

A letter from Professor Uzielli to Señor de La Rosa, replying to a note he had received from de La Rosa relative to the statements the latter had made at the Congress of the Americanists.

No. 8. GRAVIER (Gabriel).—La Lettre et la Carte de Toscanelli

à Fernam Martins et à Christophe Colomb d'après Henry Vignaud, par M. Gabriel Gravier, Président honoraire de la Société Normande de Géographie. Rouen, Cagniard, 1902, small 4to, p. 23. (From the *Bulletin de la Société Normande de Géographie*, January to March 1902).

A careful analysis of the views and arguments of M. V., whose conclusions the venerable author of *Cavelier de Lassalle*, of *Champlain*, and of many other standard works on the discovery and colonisation of America, readily accepts.

No. 9. MARCEL (Gabriel).—Toscanelli et Christophe Colomb d'après un ouvrage récent. (*La Géographie*. Paris, April 15, 1902, p. 6.)

The learned keeper of the map department of the National Library of Paris discusses the principal arguments presented by M. V. in support of his views, and agrees with him on the main points. He believes there was forgery, but, with M. de La Rosa, he ascribes it to Columbus himself.

No. 10. VIGNAUD (Henry).—Mémoire sur l'authenticité de la Lettre de Toscanelli du 25 Juin 1474, adressé d'abord au Portugais Fernam Martins et plus tard à Christophe Colomb. Extrait du compte rendu du Congrès international des Américanistes tenu en Septembre 1900. Précédé d'une réponse à mes critiques: Lettres à Messieurs G. Uzielli, Hermann Wagner, et L. Gallois. Paris, Leroux, 1902, 8vo, pp. xl.-33.

As shown by the title, this is a separate issue of the paper read by M. V. to the Americanist Congress of 1900; to it are added:—

1. A letter to Professor Uzielli (March 1902) in reply to his paper: *Toscanelli, Colombo*, etc. (No. 5).

2. A letter to Professor Hermann Wagner of the University of Göttingen (April 1902) in reply to his Review of M. V.'s Book (No. 4).

3. A letter to Professor L. Gallois of the Ecole Nor-

male Supérieure of Paris (April 1902) in reply to his paper (No. 6).

No. 11. Uzielli (Gustavo).—Polemica Toscanelliana. (*Rivista geografica Italiana*, Part VI., June 1902. Rome.)

A letter to M. V. in acknowledgment of a copy of his *Mémoire* (No. 10).

No. 12. Beazley (C. Raymond).—The Toscanelli Map. (*Geographical Journal*, June 1902.)

A short review of M. V.'s French edition; complimentary to the author, but decidedly adverse to his conclusions.

No. 13. Rüge (Dr Sophus).—Die Echtheit des Toscanelli-Briefes (the authorship of the Toscanelli Letter). (*Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin*, No. 6. Berlin, 1902, 8vo, pp. 390-511.)

An unfavourable review of M. V.'s French book (No. 2). Repeats the objections made by several other critics.

No. 14. Marcel (A.).—Revue de Géographie. Paris, June 1902.

No. 15. Lyle (E. P.).—Did Columbus discover America? (*Everybody's Magazine.* New York, June.)

Review of the book for the general reader. Illustrations.

No. 16. Vignaud (Henry).—Toscanelli and Columbus. Letters to Professor Hermann Wagner (July 18, 1902). (*New York Herald.* Paris, June 27, 1902.)

This second letter of M. V. to Professor Wagner is in reply to various letters received from him with regard to some of the points raised.

No. 17. *The Aberdeen Free Press*, August 28.

An elaborate and competent review of the book. Most favourable.

No. 18. *The Tablet.* London, August 22.

Another careful, competent, and favourable review of the book.

No. 19. Uzielli (Gustavo).—Antonio di Tuccio Manetti, Paolo Toscanelli e la lunghezza delle miglia nel secolo delle Scoperte.

(From the *Rivista geografica Italiana*, Part VIII., August 1902. Rome, 8vo, p. 26.)

An interesting monograph on Manetti, with occasional remarks on M. de La Rosa's and M. V.'s sophisms and quibbles.

No. 20. HAZELTINE (M. W.).—Columbus and Toscanelli. (*The Sun*. New York, August 23, 1902.)

A careful analysis of M. V.'s book, but rather sceptical.

No. 21. UZIELLI (Gustavo).—Toscanelli, Colombo e Vespucci. (From the *Atti del IV. Congresso Geografico Italiano*. Milan, 1902, 8vo, p. 33.)

A learned paper adorned with numerous amusing notes in reply to M. V.'s letter to him (No. 10), and in refutation of M. de La Rosa's position.

No. 22. HUGUES (Luigi).—La Lettera di Paolo dal Pozzo Toscanelli a Fernam Martins a proposito di un libro recente del Sig. Enrico Vignaud, Nota di Luigi Hugues. Casale, Monferrato Tip. Casalesce Fr. LLi. Tarditi, 1902, 8vo, p. 32.

An able and fair review of M. Vignaud's book. M. Hugues, who is the author of various valuable papers on Columbus and Vespucci, has carefully studied M. V.'s work, and is the first Italian of high scientific standing to do him justice.

No. 23. VIGNAUD (Henry).—Toscanelli and Columbus. The Letter and Chart of Toscanelli on the route to the Indies by way of the West sent, in 1474, to the Portuguese, Fernam Martins, and later on to Christopher Columbus. A critical study on the authenticity and value of these documents, and the sources of the cosmographical ideas of Columbus, followed by the various texts of the Letter, with translations and annotations, and also several facsimiles and a map. By Henry Vignaud, First Secretary of the United States Embassy at Paris; Vice-President of the Society of Americanists of Paris, etc. London, Sands & Co., 8vo, pp. xix.-1-365.

This work differs in many respects from the French

version. It contains several new chapters, a number of additional notes, including some of the most important character, fresh appendices, and a curious map.

No. 24. CORTISSOZ (Royal).—Columbus: a Criticism of his Scientific Pretensions, and a charge of Fraud. (*The Tribune*. New York, September 27, 1902.)

A competent review of the American edition of M. V.'s work, it takes exception to certain points, but in the main agrees with him.

No. 25. LA ROSA (Gonzalez de).—La Solution de tous les Problèmes relatifs à Christophe Colomb et, en particulier, de celui des Origines ou des prétendus inspirateurs de la découverte du Nouveau Monde, par M. Gonzalez de La Rosa, Membre de la Société des Americanistes, ancien professeur à l'Université de Lima, etc. (From the *Proceedings of the International Congress of Américanists*, held in September 1900. Paris, Leroux, 1902, 8vo, p. 22.)

A very learned paper in which M. de La Rosa, from whom originated the idea that the Colombo-Toscanelli correspondence was a forgery, gives a summary of his studies on the early part of Columbus's life. M. de L. R. proposes to publish an important work on the subject. In its present shape this paper was written after the printing of M. V.'s French and English works on the subject.

No. 26. MORI (A.).—Discussioni Colombiane e Toscanelliane. (*Rivista geografica Italiana*, November 1902.)

A review of M. de La Rosa's paper.

No. 27. GALLOIS (L.).—La Lettre de Toscanelli à Christophe Colomb. (*Annales de Géographie*, November 1902. Paris, 8vo, pp. 448-511.)

Critical remarks on M. V.'s letter to him (No. 10), on his English work (No. 23), and on M. de La Rosa's paper. Adverse.

No. 28. MARKHAM (Sir Clements R.).—New Theories on Columbus. (*Times*, Literary Supplement. London, November 7, 1902.)

A considerate and careful examination of M. V.'s propositions which are not found tenable.

No. 29. BEAZLEY (C. Raymond).—Toscanelli and Columbus. (*The Guardian.* London, November 19, 1902.)

A learned but adverse review of M. V.'s work.

No. 30. VIGNAUD (Enrique).—La Carta y el Mappa de Toscanelli sobre la ruta de las Indias por el Oeste enviados en 1474 al Portugues Fernan Martins y trasladados màs tarde á Cristobal Colon . . . obra traducida del Frances y anotada por Juan B. Enseñat, individuo correspondiente de la Real Academia Española de la Historia, etc., etc. (Madrid, *Biblioteca de la Irradiacion*, 1902, 18mo, p. 247.)

A faithful translation of M. V.'s French work, but with very few of the notes and without some of the appendix. The translator has added a few interesting notes.

MINOR NOTICES

(*FAVOURABLE*)

1901.

1. *Brooklyn Eagle.* July 7.
2. *The Sun.* New York, July 23.
3. *Daily Messenger.* Paris, September 20.
4. *Brooklyn Eagle.* October 1.
5. *Daily Mail.* London, October 1.
6. *L'Indépendance Belge.* Brussels, October 1. "Christophe Colomb à la Lumière des nouvelles Recherches historiques": Ange Morre.
7. *Figaro.* Paris, October 1.
8. *La Politique Coloniale.* Paris, October 2.

9. *Le Voltaire.* Paris, October 2. "La Fin d'une Légende": J. de Bonal.
10. *The Standard.* London, October 4.
11. *Morning Post.* London, October 4.
12. *St James's Gazette.* London, October 4.
13. *Le Français.* Paris, October 4.
14. *The Westminster Gazette.* London, October 5. "Poor Columbus": Montague Crackanthorpe.
15. *South American Journal.* London, October 5.
16. *L'Univers et le Monde.* Paris, October 5.
17. *The Sun.* New York, October 6. "M. Vignaud and Columbus": Victor Collins.
18. *La Gironde.* Bordeaux, October 8.
19. *Evening Post.* New York, October 8. "The Discovery of America": S. Dewey.
20. *L'Abeille de la Nouvelle Orléans.* October 10.
21. *Brooklyn Eagle.* October 11.
22. *Courrier des Etats-Unis.* New York, October 11.
23. *The Times.* London, October 11.
24. *South American Journal.* London, October 12. "Columbus and the Discovery of America": Victor S. Frank.
25. *The Tablet.* London, October 12.
26. *The Picayune.* New Orleans, October 27.
27. *The Herald.* New York, October 26. "Startling Discoveries about Columbus."
28. *The Open Court.* Chicago, October. "Columbus and Toscanelli": Theod. Stanton.
29. *The World.* New York, November 3.
30. *The International Courier.* London, November 9.
31. *Kölnische Zeitung.* Cologne, November 11.
32. *Journal des Débats.* Paris, November 17. "Un Ouvrage sur Colomb."
33. *Berliner Neusten Nachrichten.* Berlin, November 27.
34. *Wiener Zeitung.* Vienna, November 28.
35. *Neues Wiener Journal.* Vienna, November 28.

36. *Le Matin.* Paris, November 28. "Colomb déboulonné": Gaston Stiegler.
37. *Salzburger Zeitung.* Salzburg, November 30.
38. *Posener Tagblatt.* Posen, December 1.
39. *Petit Parisien.* Paris, December 4.
40. *Le Soleil.* Paris, December 8.
41. *Oesterreichische Volkszeitung.* Vienna, December 8.
42. *Le Voltaire.* Paris, December 10.
43. *Reichenberger Zeitung.* Reichenberger, December 12.
44. *Le Populaire.* Paris, December 12.
45. *L'Abeille de la Nouvelle Orléans.* December 14.
46. *Le Siècle.* Paris, December 18.
47. *Le Soir.* Paris, December 19.
48. *Le National.* Paris, December 19.
49. *La Nation.* Paris, December 19.
50. *La Presse.* Montreal, December 28.
51. *La Revue Universelle.* Paris, December. (Henri Froidevaux.)

1902.

52. *La Patrie.* Montreal, January 7.
53. *La Patrie.* Montreal, January 18.
54. *L'Abeille.* New Orleans, February 2.
55. *The New Paynesville Press.* February 6.
56. *Correio da Manha, Rio de Janeiro.* March 16.
57. *The Times-Democrat.* New Orleans, March 16.
58. *Le Temps.* Paris, April 1. (G. Deschamps).
59. *The Dial.* Chicago, April 2. "Columbus and Toscanelli": J. G. Rosengarten.
60. *Le Figaro.* Paris, June 27. (M. Beaunier.)
61. *Brooklyn Eagle.* July 6.
62. *Morning Post.* London, July 24.
63. *The Scotsman.* Edinburgh, July 23.
64. *The Daily News.* London, July 24.
65. *The Daily Chronicle.* London, July 29.
66. *Philadelphia Enquirer.* July 28.

67. *Commercial Advertiser.* New York, August 23.
68. *The Chicago Tribune.* August 24.
69. *Journal des Débats.* Paris, August 9. (Maurice Muret.)
70. *Indépendance Belge.* Brussels, August 30.
71. *Le Matin.* Antwerp, August 30.
72. *Dundee Advertiser.* August 8.
73. *Pittsburg Post.* September 3.
74. *Baltimore Sun..* September 25.
75. *Dawson Weekly News.* Yukon Territory, September 19.
76. *L'Abeille.* New Orleans, September 14.
77. *Times-Democrat.* New Orleans, September 23.
78. *Sydney Mail.* October 1.

(*UNFAVOURABLE*

1901.

1. *Plain Dealer.* Cleveland, October 2.
2. *La Reforme.* Alexandrie, December 7.
3. *Petit Parisien.* Paris, December 4.

1902.

4. *Revue Historique.* (H. Hauser), January.
5. *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society.* New York, April. (Strongly adverse).
6. *The Times.* New York, July 1.
7. *Globus.* Brunswick, July 24.
8. *Glasgow Herald.* July 26.
9. *Westminster Gazette.* London, July 26.
10. *Truth.* London, July 21.
11. *Manchester Guardian.* September 23.
12. *Evening Standard.* London, September 1.
13. *L'Italie.* Rome, September 2.
14. *Birmingham Free Post.* November 25.

The Compiler of this Bibliography has not had access to the Spanish and Italian papers, and to only a few of the German.

To Sir Clements R. Markham, C.B., F.R.S., London.

My dear Sir,—You will, I am sure, permit me to add a few remarks to the correspondence we have already exchanged on the subject of the article you were good enough to contribute to the London *Times* (Literary Supplement of November 7, 1902) on my book, *Toscanelli and Columbus.*

I.

Your article and the letters you have subsequently sent me, most kindly to me personally though sufficiently severe on my deductions, called from me the remark that my arguments had been shelved but not answered.

You protest against that remark which I now propose to justify.

You say, "that those who have adopted a theory, and eagerly search for evidence to support it, insensibly become more and more prejudiced in favour of their own views, and less able to weigh the counter-evidence with an equal balance." Your remark is judicious and sound; but I do not think it is applicable to my case, as I did not set out on my work with a preconceived theory. Quite the contrary, in fact; for at first, like every one else, I was a firm believer in the letters attributed to Toscanelli: it was only after long and laborious research, and a close study of the question from all points of view and in its minutest details, that I yielded to La Rosa's opinion, and satisfied myself that such a letter as the one to Canon

Martins could neither have been written at the date it bears nor by such a man as Toscanelli.

I always yield to argument when it is justified: that has been seen in my controversy with Wagner.

But when those, who have for long identified themselves with one view of the question, entrench themselves in their old position and ignore the new arguments with which they are assailed, then I say it is they and not I who close their eyes to the real situation.

II.

I am afraid I must claim your own article furnishes a proof in point. As many others have done, and as though I had not already fully answered them, you confront me with the following two objections:—

1. In 1494 the Duke of Ferrara made inquiries about Toscanelli's correspondence with Columbus; therefore this correspondence was known in Italy, and consequently M. Vignaud is wrong when he states that none of the celebrated Florentine's countrymen knew of his taking an interest in the route to the Indies, and that he had written to Columbus on the subject.

2. Conti and others used the expressions "Great Khan" and "Cathay" long after they had ceased to be current in China; therefore M. Vignaud is again wrong when he states that a man of learning like Toscanelli would not have used those expressions, and that they constitute a proof that the letter in which they occur is apocryphal.

I have already and repeatedly shown that these two arguments will not hold water. Yet such eminent critics as Uzielli, Wagner, Gallois, Beazley, and (I must now add) you, continue imperturbably to urge them against me.

Well! I can only demonstrate once more their utter lack of bottom, convinced that it is well worth the trouble,

as I am sure you are not, as I fear many of my critics are, a slave to old opinions.

III.

To begin then. The argument drawn from the fact that the Duke of Ferrara made inquiries respecting this alleged correspondence has importance only if it can be shown he heard of it from an Italian source; for, if he got his information from Spain, nothing is proved, as it was in Spain the forgeries are supposed to have been committed.

Now the very form of the Duke's inquiry proves that he got his information from Spain. He asks, in fact, whether among Toscanelli's papers any document has been found bearing on the new islands just discovered by Spain. But in the letter attributed to Toscanelli there is no question of islands or lands to be discovered; it only refers to a new route to proceed to the Indies. It is not therefore some communication made to him by a Florentine or some other Italian, conversant with Toscanelli's ideas and aware of his correspondence with Martins or Columbus, that led the Duke to make his inquiry. It is the rumour coming from Spain that it was said there Columbus had been in communication with Toscanelli that arouses the Duke's interest and curiosity. Were it otherwise, if some one in Italy had known of the existence of this correspondence, the Duke's researches and the excitement created by the discovery of Columbus would have brought the fact to light. Florentines would at once have claimed for their illustrious fellow-citizen the full credit due to him for his share in the great event. But not a word was heard. Neither before nor after the discovery did a single man of that group of thinkers and writers, among whom Toscanelli had lived to the age of eighty-five, raise his voice to

proclaim that their great townsman and friend had occupied himself with the subject of reaching the Indies by way of the West, and had thus led to the great discovery made by Columbus.

It will not serve to reply that I take the view that the letters were not written until after the time when they were mentioned by the Duke; for, although such in fact is my opinion, I have very clearly explained in my book that the existence of such a correspondence was bruited as early as 1494, in order to destroy the annoying effect of the rumours then already afloat, that Columbus had received precise information from a pilot.

I think after this explanation I am entitled to ask, Is it justifiable to allege, as you have done, that the request for information made by Duke Hercules "is most conclusive evidence, and M. Vignaud is unable to explain it away by any plausible hypothesis"?

IV.

I now come to the second objection.

Poggio Bracciolini, who edited Conti's Travels, and many other Italian writers, even of a much later date, may well have used the expressions "Great Khan," "Cathay," "Mangi," etc., which were in use in China in the time of Marco Polo, for the very simple reason that they and all Europeans of their epoch knew no other. But Toscanelli is on a different footing, provided we agree that the letter to Martins is genuine. In that case he has had conversations with the Ambassador of the Chinese Emperor; he has cross-examined him on the affairs of his country; he has indeed learnt so much from him that he feels qualified to give special information about China to the Portuguese. Consequently Toscanelli could not be any longer ignorant of the fact that the names of the places mentioned by

Marco Polo were changed; surely a not unimportant piece of information to give to people who proposed visiting that country. I maintain that this passage alone of the letter suffices to damn its authenticity; for it is known that no such Chinese Ambassador came to Europe at that time, and if one had come he would not have left Toscanelli in ignorance of the fact that his master was no longer styled "Great Khan" nor his country "Cathay."[1]

I think you will see, Sir, that this objection to my argument carries you no further than the previous one. I shall now *currente calamo* touch upon a few of the other objections you have raised.

V.

"M. Vignaud would put off the date (of the Toscanelli letter to Columbus) until after the war (of Castille) ended in 1479."

I have done so because the words of the letter, "before the wars of Castille," lead to the belief that they were written after that war, which ended only in 1479. I could not, moreover, date the letter, as you have done, in July 1474, inasmuch as Columbus only arrived in Portugal in 1476, a fact now universally admitted.

VI.

"The story (of the pilot) has been unhesitatingly re-

[1] In my first letter to Hermann Wagner I have more fully developed this point. Since then, however, La Rosa has pointed out the very source whence the author of the letter to Canon Martins drew his information about Toscanelli interviewing the Ambassador of the Great Khan. It is a passage from Landino's commentary on the *Georgics* of Virgil, wherein reference is made to some persons who had come to Italy from the sources of the Tanaïs, and with whom Toscanelli had conversed. (See *Solution de tous les Problèmes*, XII[e] Congrès des Américanistes. Paris, 1902, p. 50). Landino's commentary was first published in 1487, and the passage cited had already caught Humboldt's attention.

jected as a fable . . . the tale bears fabrication on every line."

To say this is merely to repeat what others have said before; it is no reply to my critical analysis of the sources of information of the story of the pilot. The fact that Columbus never dwelt at Madeira or Porto Santo proves nothing. The contradictory details in the story of the pilot's adventure lack importance, and they need not detain us. What is important is that there was such a pilot, whose very name remains doubtful, but who gave Columbus information which the latter turned to good use. I have never gone beyond that statement.

VII.

Las Casas "dismisses it (the story of the pilot) with contempt."

This is scarcely accurate. Las Casas has indeed said what you report him as saying; but he has said other things which demonstrate it was not the story of the pilot he refused to believe but the deductions drawn from it. To him the story was a matter of no importance; one might believe or disbelieve it at will, so far as he was concerned. What he holds to be absolutely false is that Columbus could have learnt anything from this pilot which determined him to undertake his expedition; he had no need of any such information seeing that he was guided by the Hand of God, which, to the good Bishop, was naturally all-sufficient. But how can we say Las Casas dismisses the story with contempt when we find he devotes a whole chapter to its relation, that he does not contradict it, that he states he heard it from Columbus's own companions, and that he admits it may have come from the very mouth of Columbus himself.

As a matter of fact, my thesis does not require the support of the story of this particular pilot. All that I main-

tain is that Columbus had, or thought he had, positive information as to unknown islands or lands, and it was this and not any cosmographical or scientific theory which induced him to set out on his expedition. Whether this information came to him from the pilot in question or from some other source matters little.

VIII.

"The sole justification for bringing such an accusation (forgery) against that individual (Bartholomew Columbus) is that he is said to have been a good cosmographer, and it is assumed that he was a bad Latin scholar."

I do not think these are, by any means, the only reasons for suspecting that Bartholomew had a hand in the fraud.

Another, and an important one, is that in this same volume of Pius II., now in the Columbina, containing the copy of the so-called Toscanelli letter and immediately following it, one finds an autograph note relating to the Commission appointed to draw up Tables of Declension, and that this note is in the same handwriting as the copy of the letter, as any one may see for himself by the facsimiles published in the *Raccolta Colombiana, Autografi di Colombo*, Serie B., Nos. 854 and 860.

This note, No. 860 of the *Raccolta*, is undoubtedly from the hand of Bartholomew Columbus, as is proved by the most competent authority on this subject, viz., M. Simon de La Rosa y López, (see *Catálogo*, p. xxxiii.,) and is still further borne out by the fact chronicled by the note, which fact relates to the year 1485, a date when Columbus himself was no longer in Portugal. But an even more important, not to say capital, reason for imputing the forgery to Bartholomew is that one of the sheets of Bartholomew's Map, which was discovered by Wieser, is on all fours with the information given in the letter of 1474, and bears this highly

typical inscription: "*according to Marinus and Columbus, from Cape St Vincent to Cattigara there are* 225 *degrees, or* 15 *hours; according to Ptolemy there are to Cattigara* 180 *degrees, or* 12 *hours.*"

If to this you add the statement made by Gallo, who had every means to be well informed on the matter, that Bartholomew was supposed to be the originator of his brother's project; that he arrived at Seville in the beginning of 1494, just after Columbus had started on his second voyage and when stories of the Pilot were being set afloat against him; if you recall it would naturally fall to him to defend his absent brother, to whom he was passionately devoted, and, furthermore, bearing in mind that Las Casas himself states that he was both bolder and less scrupulous than his elder brother, I think you will admit that the reasons for supposing it was he who concocted the correspondence attributed to Columbus and Toscanelli are less frail than you have hitherto supposed.

I admit that these arguments are only presumptions. Such problems as the one under discussion are not susceptible of complete demonstration; all that can be done is to point out what appears to have been the most likely course pursued. If fraud there were, and I think there was, it must have been committed by some one, and, under the given circumstances, I hold that the culprit can only have been Bartholomew—unless indeed it were Christopher Columbus himself. All the facts I have alleged point rather to Bartholomew than to his brother, against whom can only be charged the copying of the famous letter, if that copy be indeed by him, a fact that may very freely be doubted in spite of all that has been stated to the contrary.

IX.

"Such negative arguments . . ." (viz., those I gave for believing in the fraud) "can have no weight . . . against the direct proofs of the authenticity of the letters."

I should much like to learn from you, Sir, where I may find those direct proofs. The following are the facts: I give them without any commentary:—

No trace of the letter to Martins is to be found among Toscanelli's papers or the State Archives of Portugal. The Italians are as ignorant of its existence as are the Portuguese. No one, outside those who produced it, ever heard speak of it. The very man to whom it purports to be addressed is completely unknown. The original Latin text has vanished; not a soul has ever claimed to have seen it. The only solitary copy of the text of this letter we possess is in the handwriting of one of the persons who is suspected of forging it.

Las Casas and Ferdinand Columbus are absolutely the sole individuals who knew of the existence of the letter in the form of a translation; this they held from Columbian sources, *i.e.*, tainted sources; therefore they had an interest in producing it, although the original producers had failed to justify their possession of it. The three existing texts of the document, the Columbine copy, and the translations by Las Casas and Ferdinand Columbus, which ought all to be identical, inasmuch as one claims to be a verbatim copy of the original, and the other two translations from a single original text, differ considerably from one another.

Take notice that I pass over contested points, although to me they do not appear contestable, as, for example, the assertion made by the author of the letter that the Portuguese sought the route to the East Indies at a time when they were doing nothing of the kind; the mention

of a Chinese Embassy which never existed; the use of geographical expressions which the Ambassador in question, had he existed, would never have used; the information given to the King of Portugal that a course should be laid from the Canaries to proceed to the Indies when the Canaries belonged to Spain; and, finally, the adoption of the erroneous measurement of Marinus of Tyre by so accomplished a mathematician and astronomer as Toscanelli.

These are the facts. Do they authorise the conclusion that there are direct proofs of the genuineness of the letter? To ask that question is to answer it.

X.

I must maintain, Sir, that not one of my critics has succeeded in shaking my position. All they have done is to try and turn it. They have declined to examine with the necessary judgment and impartiality the many and weighty reasons I have adduced to show that fraud has been somewhere committed. They have even been short-sighted enough to miss the real and only valid objection that could be urged against my propositions. You alone, Sir, and not in your article have pointed it out.

Yes. If Columbus sailed from Palos with the design of going to the Indies my theory is shaken to its very foundations, and the question of the authenticity of Toscanelli's letters, as well as the truth of the story of the nameless pilot, lose all their importance. What matter to us whether Toscanelli's letters be authentic or forged, what matter whether the pilot story be true or false, if Columbus's scheme really consisted in going to the Indies? This is the only question that interests the historian and the critic, and it is settled if the expedition of 1492 really had the shores of Eastern Asia as its objective. If that was the point aimed at by Columbus it is clear he had obtained the knowledge, no

matter how, that the Indies could be more easily reached by the West than the East, and it follows, as has been said, that the discovery of America was the result of a scientific conception. In that case Columbus had in fact a great design, and the lofty place he occupies in the fane of History is legitimately his due.

XI.

Here is in all its force the judicious and very formidable objection you, and you alone, oppose to me. It cannot be avoided by any fencing, and I shall meet it fair and square. I shall show in my next work that the reasons we have for crediting Columbus with his great design cannot stand against a severe critical examination, and that the story of his seeking to reach the Indies by way of the West is a legend that first arose after he had made his discovery.

But I am under no illusion. However clear my demonstration may be it will not convince those whose opinion is already formed, and who will only consider me as an intruder on their intellectual repose. I do not expect justice from them. This great historical error will never be corrected by those who have had the bad fortune to become, unconsciously enough, the accomplices of its originators by supporting it with the weight of their high authority. It is to those who have never written on Toscanelli and Columbus that I must appeal. It is to our readers I submit the case when they have before their eyes all the documents that can be produced. They are our real judges, and I shall await their verdict with patience and serenity.—Believe me, very faithfully yours,

HENRY VIGNAUD.

PARIS, *November* 1902.

To M. C. Raymond Beazley, M.A.

Dear Sir,—In the very learned and courteous article you have devoted to my book in *The Guardian* of November 19, you have in particular directed your attention to the examination of the fundamental proposition on which rests my thesis that the letter of 1474, ascribed to Toscanelli, is apocryphal; namely, that the letter in question attributes to the Portuguese the intention of seeking a route to the East Indies at a period when as yet they had formed no such design. With excellent critical judgment you have seized the full importance of that proposition, and it is against it you urge your chief objections.

No one was more qualified to deal with this point, and I find it is a pleasure to discuss it with so competent an antagonist as the learned translator and annotator of Azurara, and the distinguished author of two works which take high rank among those dealing with the geographical history of the Middle Ages.

I.

I have said, and I repeat, that up to the end of the reign of Alfonso V. (1481) it is impossible to cite a fact, or to quote a single assertion of any author of the period, which sanctions the statement that the Portuguese were then thinking of establishing intercourse with the East Indies.

You place in relief against me certain passages of Azurara which show that Prince Henry really desired to know all that could be learned respecting the countries in Africa stretching away beyond Cape Bojador, and that he wished his expeditions ever to push further and further onward.

That this is so I willingly admit; but in what way does this prove that the East Indies were the Prince's objective? The very passages you quote prove just the contrary. Let us take an instance. You recall that during one of these expeditions a captain of the Prince urged his companions to push on to the Nile; that another expressed his willingness to press on "even to the Terrestrial Paradise —*i.e.*, the farthest East." The expedition to which you refer, viz., the one of Laçarote, was on the West Coast of Africa, this side of Cape Verde. It was in search of the river Senegal. Its leaders, like other Portuguese of that time, took that river to be a branch of the Nile, and believed that the Nile was one of the three Biblical streams which flowed through the Earthly Paradise. Hence arose the two expressions you have quoted; the words "the farthest East," which you have added to the text of Azurara, as a commentary, distort its meaning; these hardy explorers were thinking and speaking only of Africa.

II.

I will take another instance. You mention that in 1458, or rather 1455, the expedition of Gomez was accompanied by an Indian named Jacob "whom the Prince had sent with us in order that he might be able to speak with the natives in the event of our reaching India," and you exclaim: "Where is the ground for insisting that this must be the India of Prester John?"

I answer that it is because Gomez was about to explore the Gambia, and it was expected that by ascending that river India might be reached. Can it be, by chance, you maintain that the India they searched for in the heart of Africa was the India of far distant Asia? No; surely not. Then it was, as I have said, the India of Prester John

the object of the constant thoughts of Prince Henry and his captains.

Why, Sir, the very name of that *Indian* interpreter, *Jacob*, should have suggested to you that he could not be an Indian of the Far East—where no such name exists—but an Indian of the realm of Prester John: an Abyssinian of Shemitic origin. It was therefore quite natural for the Portuguese who were in search of Prester John, and who expected to reach his dominion by ascending the river Gambia, to take with them this Jacob as interpreter.

III.

You contest my proposition that before 1481 the Portuguese sought only for the India of Prester John, and you reproach me for having said that at this period it was thought the Empire of this mysterious monarch extended to the Atlantic. I maintain the first point; as to the second, I plead guilty to omitting the word "almost" after the word "bounded." In my French edition I use the right expression "confine," and it was obviously by a slip I omitted the word "almost"; for this is clear from the clauses which follow in the very same sentence:—"And that it might be possible to discover on the Western Coast of Africa some country that was dependent upon it, through which it would be possible to reach the mysterious potentate with whom they were desirous to establish relations." Furthermore, the note on this very passage at the foot of the page makes my meaning perfectly unmistakable.

If this were not the idea constantly in the minds of the Portuguese explorers, they would scarcely have made it their first care to inquire anxiously after this potentate each time they reached a new point along the coast. Nor were they alone in thus thinking; for in the above-mentioned note I

quote a passage from the chaplains of Béthancourt wherein it is said that his expedition may obtain news of Prester John at Cape Bojador. If on this point I have also quoted the Borgia Map, the value, or rather lack of value, of which I well know, I have done so only to show the existence of this belief in the wide extension of the dominions of Prester John towards the West. It matters little that this map is worthless; it is, however, scarcely fair to say that persons in the habit of consulting the Italian *portolani* would have paid no attention to it. The *portolani* were sea-charts, the Borgia was a continental map, and the seamen of Prince Henry had no call to use it.

IV.

In support of the opinion that the Portuguese had for long entertained transatlantic projects, you allege the discovery of the Azores and the voyages of discovery made in 1452, 1462, and in subsequent years.

But I must ask what is the exact bearing of this argument? The question in discussion between us is the route to the Indies, the route to the Land of Spices. Do you claim that these discoveries and expeditions of the Portuguese towards the West are evidence of an intention on their part to reach the Indies by that route, an intention dating from 1452 or 1462? If so—then what becomes of the famous letter which constitutes Toscanelli the originator of the discovery of America? What becomes of the great scheme of Columbus, that vast scheme which assures to him, in the minds of those whose opinions I combat, a loftier and more special niche in the Temple of Fame than is accorded to all other discoverers, because, forsooth, he had no other guide than a scientific conception?

If as early as 1452 and 1462 the Portuguese had already their eyes fixed on the Indies, and proposed going there

by crossing the Atlantic, Toscanelli had nothing to teach them, and he has originated nothing at all. So, too, is it with Columbus: his great scheme vanishes, and with it goes also the scientific conception which was its basis; for he has but taken up afresh projects which, times and again, other men have sought to carry out before him. I, Sir, have no objection to these conclusions; but I shall be very much surprised indeed if you find them as satisfactory as they are to me.

V.

To my assertion that in 1474 the Portuguese were thinking as little of the spice trade as they were of the route to the East Indies, you object that as early as 1428 Don Pedro brought back from Venice a copy of Marco Polo, wherein he could have learned the importance of that trade. I do not realise the bearing of this objection. In the first place it is by no means certain that Don Pedro did bring back from Venice or elsewhere a copy of Marco Polo—I give reasons for doubting this in Note 4 to my book—and if he did I do not see that it shows the Portuguese desired to proceed to the Indies in 1474 or earlier in order to engage in the spice trade.

VI.

I shall not linger on the other objections you make, as they are only of minor importance; but I think I ought to call attention to the standpoint taken by those who with you maintain against me that the questions of the route to the Indies and of the spice trade were raised in Portugal before the reign of Joao II.

They assume that I put forward an extraordinary proposal in flat contradiction to all historical tradition, and that consequently it is encumbent on me to establish my case; whereas

the facts are all the other way; it is they who are in open revolt against the most authentic data we possess on the subject, and against the teaching of history as known and accepted for centuries.

The notion that Prince Henry and the Portuguese of his time thought of circumnavigating Africa in order to reach the East Indies and establish the spice trade is a modern idea. Contemporary Portuguese writers do not breathe a word on the subject, but affirm, on the contrary, that the initiative of this conception is due to King Joao II.

In alleging that a letter, which states that in 1474 the Portuguese were seriously engaged in trying to find a route to the Indies by way of Guinea, and affects to teach them it will be more to their advantage to reach the spice-producing countries by way of the West, was on that account alone apocryphal, I have only had to rely on accepted data, on well known and admitted facts, of which therefore I was not called upon to produce the proofs although I did so.

It is for those to whom these facts are inconvenient to prove that they are false. It lay with me to show that the letter of 1474, in which every one placed faith, was apocryphal; it lies with them now to show that the initiative attributed to King Joao II by all Portuguese authors is not really his.

Better versed in the history of Portuguese discoveries than most of my adversaries, you have said all that could be said on the subject; but, while in no way undervaluing your learned criticisms, I do not think they have attained the end you had in view. What you, Sir, have failed to do I am sure no one will succeed in doing: the task is simply impossible. Believe me, very faithfully yours,

HENRY VIGNAUD.

PARIS, *December* 1902.

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